

Identifying Needs and Opportunities for Collaboration

21st Century Partners in Prevention

When thinking about engaging partners in efforts to prevent substance use and misuse, a few key players may immediately come to mind, such as parents and law enforcement. While these more traditional partners remain invaluable, today's continually evolving prevention landscape requires us to think "outside the box" and reach out to new partners who can help us address emerging drug trends, access populations in greatest need, and extend the reach of our prevention efforts.

The following inventory offers a comprehensive list of community stakeholder groups, highlighting the ways that these "non-traditional" partners may enhance your prevention efforts. The list has been divided into three categories of partners: health, state and local government, and communities.

Health Partners

- **Community Health Centers:** Community health centers (CHCs), particularly Federally Qualified Health Centers, offer a wide range of health promotion and prevention programs. They are also likely to be the recipients of additional federal promotion and prevention funds in the years to come. CHCs reach a large population of people, making them important partners when looking to extend the reach of prevention efforts.
- **Emergency Medical Services:** State and local emergency medical services (EMS) provide emergency medical care prior to hospital admittance, making them one of the first points of contact in emergencies related to substance use and misuse. EMS respond to a wide range of emergencies, including accidental overdose, drug-related violence, and drunk driving accidents. As first responders, their records may shed light on substance use problems in the community. As partners, these agencies could provide critical substance use data on emerging drug trends.
- **Health Insurers:** With the enactment of the Affordable Care Act and the nation's shift toward universal insurance coverage, the role of health insurance providers in prevention efforts is likely to increase dramatically. Insurance providers will be serving more people than ever, and have an investment in keeping subscribers healthy. Prevention is often the key to doing so.

- **Hospitals:** As the converging point for a range of health problems, hospitals are often the first to be aware of community health issues, including changes in substance use patterns and substance-related overdoses. Their data can help you understand local conditions. In addition, many hospitals provide patient education on a variety of health issues, making hospitals effective channels for disseminating prevention literature. Most hospitals treating trauma patients also have an injury prevention center that focuses on preventable injuries such as traffic-related injuries and deaths, suicide, and drownings. These injury prevention centers may be interested in partnering with substance abuse prevention because of the high correlation between substance use and misuse and preventable injuries.
- **Medical Examiner or Coroner's Office:** Most states, and many counties, require a medical examiner or coroner's report for each person whose death resulted from violence or injury. These reports often contain information regarding drug or alcohol use at the time of death, providing insight into the consequences of local substance use.
- **Poison Control Centers:** Poison control centers often serve as a first point of contact in cases of prescription and illicit drug overdose. These centers track all of the calls they receive, making them valuable sources of information on emerging drug trends and public health concerns. Additionally, poison control centers often provide educational materials to help prevent overdose, making them strong potential partners in larger substance misuse prevention efforts.
- **Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs:** Most states maintain an electronic prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) to track the distribution of federally controlled medical substances. These programs allow health care practitioners to identify and prevent the misuse of prescription drugs by tracking each patient's prescriptions statewide. PDMPs possess a wealth of data, though this data is sometimes difficult to access. Partnering with PDMPs to promote substance misuse prevention may facilitate the sharing of important data related to prescription drug misuse.
- **Primary Care Organizations:** These organizations see large numbers of patients and serve as a place where various health care providers connect with individuals in a community. Because prevention is often central to their work, they could be valued partners in promoting messaging to prevent substance use and misuse.
- **Visiting Nurses Associations:** Visiting nurses associations support and promote the work of home health, hospice, and palliative care, particularly serving the elderly and individuals with disabilities. As organizations dedicated to promoting the health of these particularly vulnerable patients, visiting nurses associations can serve as strong partners in promoting substance misuse prevention to patients who may otherwise be isolated from society.

State and Local Government Partners

- **Departments of Children and Family Services:** State departments dedicated to the health and safety of children often provide services to help families better care for their children. Since substance use frequently plays a role in cases of child abuse or neglect, these agencies have an investment in promoting prevention efforts.
- **Department of Education:** Departments of education have long served as key players in substance use prevention efforts. Partnering with departments of education can provide access to young people, including those at increased risk for substance misuse and related behavioral health problems. School-based interventions are also critical components of many comprehensive prevention initiatives.
- **Department of Human Services:** In the upcoming years, departments of human services will become increasingly important partners in prevention, since these departments are, in most states, responsible for Medicare, Medicaid, and any other state-led health insurance programs. Under the [Affordable Care Act](#), these programs are mandated to provide certain prevention services at no cost.
- **Departments or Bureaus of Motor Vehicles:** Each state department of motor vehicles has a designated Office of Highway Safety that funds drunk or drugged driving prevention programs. As state departments or bureaus of motor vehicles (DMV/BMVs) frequently address the dangers of substance use and driving in their driver's education curricula, partnering with DMVs can be particularly useful in reaching young drivers with messaging to prevent substance use and misuse. DMVs also provide "driving under the influence" (DUI) and "driving while intoxicated" (DWI) programs for those convicted of a DUI or DWI. These programs aim to educate drivers about the dangers of DUI/DWI in order to prevent future violations.
- **Elected Government Officials:** Elected officials have the power to widely publicize and lend legitimacy to substance misuse prevention efforts due to their presence in the public eye. If you can identify a common goal or priority, the right elected official may even have the political sway to help secure additional funding sources to support your prevention efforts—either by allocating local government funds or by promoting the importance of substance misuse prevention to potential funders.
- **Veterans and Military Organizations:** Many branches of the military, particularly the National Guard, are very interested in supporting community prevention efforts. They also provide access to military families who may be at increased risk for, or experiencing, substance use and misuse and other behavioral disorders as a result of post-traumatic stress.

Community Partners

- **Community Action Programs, Shelters, and Food Pantries:** These settings provide access to hard-to-reach populations who may be very vulnerable to substance abuse, such as the homeless, pregnant women, and people with disabilities.
- **Community-Based Coalitions and Agencies:** Local coalitions and/or chapters of national organizations can provide a unique point of access to specific populations. For example, if looking to address substance use among immigrant populations, a local community organization that provides services to new immigrants would be a critical partner. In addition, partnering with agencies with common or overlapping goals—such as a tobacco control or mental health coalition—can facilitate coordination across agencies and reduce duplication of effort.
- **Domestic Violence Organizations:** Families experiencing domestic violence are often impacted by substance use and other behavioral disorders. Domestic violence organizations can provide you with important information about these issues as well as access to this at-risk population.
- **Employers:** Some employers, particularly employers of young adults and other at-risk populations, can provide critical access to otherwise hard-to-reach groups. Some employers may also be interested in supporting prevention efforts in the interest of maintaining a healthy and thriving workforce. When partnering with employers, framing the issue in a positive light and highlighting the benefits to the workplace are especially important.
- **Local Colleges and Universities:** Local colleges and universities provide access to youth ages 18–24, a traditionally hard-to-reach population. They also can provide access to older youth volunteers, graduate students versed in evaluation and community assessment, as well as professors knowledgeable in the science of mental health and substance use disorders, sound educational practices, and the use of media in prevention.
- **Recovery Organizations:** Most states and jurisdictions now have a statewide recovery organization to organize recovering individuals, families, and friends into a collective voice to educate the public about the value of recovery from substance addictions. Its members are committed to advocating for community efforts that support recovery and prevention.
- **School and Community Websites:** Since many people now use the Internet as a primary source of information, school and community websites are excellent vehicles for getting your prevention messages and programming information out to parents and other community members. Some school districts also have websites for students where you can post messages and information.
- **Senior Citizen Programs:** Programs for senior citizens can provide insight into substance misuse issues that affect the older adults in our community. They also can provide volunteers for prevention programs.